



FORESTRY NEWS



A Conversation with Chief Forester Pete Wakeland

Mr. Pete Wakeland arrived in his new office in Washington D.C. on September 19, 2016. The following interview took place on September 30, 2016.



He served his tribe, the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde, as Forester, Natural Resources Director, and finally Deputy Executive Director over a span of 20 years. He was in charge of 13 tribal departments in the Executive Director position. A Tribal Administrator job then led him to the United Auburn Tribe in California before he returned to Oregon as the Natural Resources Manager with the Coquille Indian Tribe. Mr. Wakeland and his

wife have two grown sons. The following interview took place on September 30, 2016.

You were the Natural Resources Director for two tribes in Oregon. Did they tend to manage their land base similarly or quite differently? Actually both, but in different aspects. Both tribes took the approach of managing all of the natural resources on their land, but Coquille had to manage their forest under the umbrella of the Northwest Forest Plan while Grande Ronde did not. Both do a great job of taking care of their resource values.

What do you see as the primary issues facing forestry in Indian Country? We've got to look at the forest as a whole. We need to be paying attention to climate change. Who knows all that may be occurring? I can see incremental changes that have happened. I think it is something we really need to think about. We also have to find a way to bridge the gap between tribal and BIA employees. We must also recruit our replacements. We're getting old! We've got some big recruitment to do. **What are your top priorities for your first year as the BIA Chief Forester?** I want to get to know and understand the people in different regions around the country and find out what their regional priorities are. Budget maintenance will also be a big priority. **I know that you have a degree in Forest Management from Oregon State University. How important is education in your life and that of your family?** Incredibly important. Getting my degree opened the door for me to manage resources for my tribe. That was a huge honor. For my boys, education was just as important. One is now a Tribal Biologist for the Coquille Tribe while

the other is Tribal Attorney for the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde. Education is what allowed them to do what was important for them. **Have you been to Washington D.C. before?** I worked here twice: In 1994, while still in college, I did an internship with the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service). I knew even then that I wanted to come back. Later in 1998-1999, I received a Hatfield Fellowship (named after Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon) and worked with Oregon Senator Ron Wyden. This fellowship allowed me to travel to Washington D.C., attend a month-long American Political Science Association course to become acclimated to the environment in D.C., and then to work as a staff assistant to the Senator on many diverse issues. **What are some of the life lessons that you learned from working in Natural Resources for the different tribes?** The biggest life lesson is that it is an honor and privilege to be able to serve your people like this. We must always remember to maintain proper respect for having that privilege. 🌲